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SPIN OFF

Fogerty overloaded

John Fogerty, the brainchild behind Creedence Clearwater Revival, has been absent from the rock scene for awhile. His first solo album since leaving CCR, under the pseudonym Blue Ridge Rangers, was critically hailed but a thumping dud compared to the monster sales of Creedence.

Now, with his first solo album for the Asylum label, entitled **Fogerty,** the question still arises: Has Fogerty lost his touch?

Certainly the familiarity with rock 'n' roll in its most basic forms is still there, but the suggestive sparseness of the Creedence sound is missing. Instead we hear a Fogerty who strains his vocals at times and overloads the production with fancy but sometimes obtrusive arrangements.

There's no doubt that a master craftsman is at work here and the same ingredients which made CCR famous are evident somewhere within the clamorous sound. The talent is there, in both his originals and revivals of Sea Cruise and Lonely Teardrops, among others; in other swords, he cannot seem to make a bad record. In these lean times, some Fogerty is at least better than none at all.

— Juan Rodriguez

Monarchs of reggae

Two of Reggae's three crown princes, Jimmy Cliff and Toots Hibert have new albums out. (Bob Marley is Jamaica's third jewel).

Jimmy Cliff's **Follow my Mind** (on Reprise) is a classic example of Pop Reggae superbly done. Lyrically, Jimmy Cliff has more to offer than any of his reggae brothers and, if the message isn't quite as strong as on his brilliant Unlimited album, it still shines through with joyous positivity.

The album is packed with songs that make you feel good all over. The kind of songs that you feel yourself smiling to. The hopeful Remake the World is a standout as are Wajaka Man and Look at the Mountain. Also included is a superb version of Bob Marley's No Woman No Cry.

If Jimmy Cliff is silky smooth, then Toots and the Maytalls are raspy and powerful.Their new album **Funky Kingston** (on Island) is their first in North America and is a collection of some of their best work over the last few years in their native Jamaica.

The relentless cut Time Tough sets the mood for the album. The already classic Pressure Drop — from the movie The Harder They Come — is included. A great reggae version of Louise Louie has to be heard to be believed — as does John Denver's Country Road, but for different reasons.

— Doug Pringle

Oasis of good times

Imagine two excellent musicians and singers who have been playing together all of their lives since the Greenwich Village scene of 15 years ago.

Imagine that when rock got big they played in popular New York bands such as the Children of Paradise, Bear and the Blues Project. Imagine then that tired of the rock scene they went back to the country-folk idiom, made two albums for a big record company and then moved to the country where they could play for the fun and sheer enjoyment of their music.

If you're still with me you're imagining **Happy & Artie Traum,** whose new album, **Hard Times in The Country** (Rounder) is an oasis of good-time music.

Happy's tribute song to the late Mississippi John Hurt is totally infectious, as is the spiritual I Bid You Goodnight, from the repertoire of Joseph Spence, the incredible Bahamian guitarist.

The Freight Train Blues and Blow Your Whistle Freight Train are up-tempo pre-Nashville country tunes that set the toes to tapping and the fingers to drumming. Included are three instrumentals that spotlight the Traums fine talents as acoustic guitarists.

Backing up the Traums is a collection of their musical friends that include such people as Paul Butterfield, Larry Packer and Arlen Roth.

— Mike Regenstreif

Weston with curves

One of the qualifications which can never be applied to Randy Weston's piano style is straight ahead — never, ever. He probably knows all the curves between point A and point B, and he covers most of them within seconds. If you like musical nooks and crannies, by all means listen to **Carnival** (Arista). It's Weston's latest album, recorded live at Montreux in 1974.

The group featured is an odd quintet with the leader on piano; Billy Harper on tenor sax and flute; William Allen, bass; and two percussionists — Don Moye on traps and percussion and Steve Berrios on congas and percussion.

The music consists of two long group tunes and one piano solo, Tribute to Duke Ellington, where Randy shines in touching glory. On Carnival, the ambiance is West-Indian and cooks along in happiest fashion with Weston playing the most percussive piano keyboard in the world. Mystery of Love is a composition of Ghanaian drummer Guy Warren and his interpretation of Romeo and Juliet. The lyrical wanderings of Billy Harper's flute hold a constant exotic fascination and the inter-play between the musicians is as light and solid as the desert sands.

This album brings up only one regret: Randy Weston should be recorded at least once a month, played every day on te radio, and a staple on every juke box.

* * *

Practically the same comment applies to another recent release by The HeadHunters, a splinter group from the Herbie Hancock musical family. The album is called **Survival of the Fittest** (Arista), co-produced by David Rubinson and Herbie Hancock.

Bennie Maupin carries a lot of weight on saxello, bass clarinet, tenor sax, acoustic piano and vocals; Mike Clark is on drums; Paul Jackson on electric bass; Blackbird McKnight on guitar; Joyce Jackson on flute and alto flute; and the percussion is a rainbow, a forest and a sea of sounds from Bill Summers, Harvey Mason, Zak Diouf and Baba Duru. Everyone joins in for the vocals, including the Pointer Sisters. They're all a sparkling source of joy.

The music is sometimes funky, sometimes ritualistic an tribal, sometimes spacey, or drivey, or humourous. It travels and it covers a lot of ground and moods. The beat is always there, and the melodies soar free above their anchor.

This group is clean, tight, exciting and has tamed the electric sounds to design the most creative imagery possible to date. The melodic richness of percussion is exposed without fault in remarkable discipline and sensitivity. A rare feat.

—Nighthawk

Human Factor sluggish; Gould falls flat in Whiffs

By DANE LANKEN of The Gazette

Tedious is the best description for two of the movies that arrived at local screens yesterday.

The Human Factor, starring the ham-fisted, ham-faced George Kennedy as straight-shooting cop, is an attempted thriller. Whiffs, with an unfunny Elliott Gould in the lead, is an alleged comedy.

Neither one delivers anything more than yawns.

George Kennedy used to be a tough guy (Cool Hand Luke), but his recent roles have found him as sympathetic as menacing. Nowadays he's the quiet guy with the big stick: He'll take a lot, but when he's pushed too far, watch out.

That's the set-up in The Human Factor (at the Claremont and Dorval). Kennedy is an American special cop operating in Italy. His enemy is a terrorist gang led by a former Berkeley student with this winning one-two combination: He was in the SDS and he majored in Arab studies.

It seems this gang of terrorists is going around wiping out American families (there haven't been so many children shot since Once Upon a Time in the West). What pushes Kennedy too far is that his family is included. Of course he goes after the gang and I don't have to tell you who wins in the end.

Jennifer O'Neill, Elliot Gould in Whiffs

COMPUTER

Kennedy is aided and abetted in his vendetta by a marvellous computor which, in the hands of John Mills, can do wonders. But of course, in the end it's bravado that saves the day.

Interesting as this may sound, the action here is as sluggish as cold spaghetti. Even the car chase, usually a high-point in this kind of movie, is dull.

Edward Dmytryk, a Canadian with 40 years worth of Hollywood movies behind him, directed The Human Factor. Whatever strengths he brought to the film were undone by a sloppy editing job.

But the most annoying thing in this movie is the repeated advertising for a well-known American cola drink. One can't imagine what sort of deal the bottler had with the movie company, but the net effect is to cheapen the film.

Whiffs (at the Seville) sadly confirms the feeling that Elliott Gould is no guarantee of a funny movie. His last — S*P*Y*S — was a disaster and this one is no improvement.

There was an attempt at whimsy, which maybe in hands other than those of director Ted Post, a recent import from television, might have worked. Here it falls flat and is then buried under a mountain of tedium.

Gould plays a veteran army private whose speciality has been to test new gas warfare products. The experience has left him less than healthy.

When the army cashiers him, he gets a chance for revenge by swiping some nerve gas and using it to knock people out so he can rob them. So far, so good — except it takes an hour to get that far. And the pace slackens after that.

Not even a couple of potential comic characterizations help. Not Eddie Albert as the colonel in charge of the poison gas centre who complains, "No-one understands us." And not Godfrey Cambridge as the crop-duster who mutters "Take that, you ecology freaks" as he powders on the poison.

And not even Jennifer O'Neill, who looks good but who has nothing to do.

Whiffs' only challenge is to stay awake till the end. And that's not even worth taking.

'If You Don't Stop . . .'

Bad movie on worse jokes

By DANE LANKEN of The Gazette

First man: My wife cut me down to once a week.

Second man: That's nothing. I know two guys she cut out all together.

Like that one?

If you did, run — don't walk — to the Atwater 1 cinema where a movie called If You Don't Stop It, You'll Go Blind is playing. It is chock full of jokes like that. No kidding. One after another. Dozens of them.

For instance, there was the one about the Chinese hooker. Two hours and you're horny again.

These are the kind of dirty jokes you heard in public school. They weren't very funny then, and they're not much funnier here, not even when they're acted out on the big screen.

And that's all that happens in this movie.

A dozen actors and actresses actually act out the jokes your dumb uncle told you at that Christmas party when your parents weren't around.

Sometimes it's just a pair of men exchanging cracks at a bar. Other times, there are men and women in costume and on sets pretending that some old joke is a script.

Wondered

Actually, Mike Callie and Bob Levy, who made this film, must be congratulated for pushing the project through. They must have wondered if it was really worth telling these old jokes again.

For instance, did you think you'd ever again hear the one about the . . . aw forget it.

Pianist gets MSO prize

Adrienne Shannon, a 25-year-old pianist from Toronto, was awarded first prize yesterday in the annual Montreal Symphony competition for young talent.

Inflated myths

Rock: Only a business?

Rock & Pop by Juan Rodriguez

Notes on the Age of Rock (a modest polemic):

Popular music, as it is defined by the sales charts, is dominated by a species of music — rock — that was hardly in existence a decade ago. If such specialized areas as country music, soul, jazz and classical are not counted, still more than 75 per cent of all the records sold are from the rock category.

There is no doubt that the recording industry is the most profitable consumer entertainment industry of all. Clearly, this developed when company executives realized that over half the population (in marketable areas) was under the age of 30 and listened to rock.

Indeed, it can be said that rock music is the pervasive cultural force (along with television) of our day.

THORN

Whereas rock's immediate predecessor, rock 'n' roll, was considered merely a thorn in the side of 1950s middle-America, today rock music has become the norm. It conveys a mythology for its audience, just as the movies had done for previous generations, a process that has escalated to the point that it is now a sacred cow.

Rock 'n' roll was hardly that dominant when it had its big-time beginnings 20 years ago. R 'n' R was the sound of the initial teenage uprising (ah, remember the days of the Blackboard Jungle!), of youthful sexuality.

It was an adaptation of behaviour that had been heralded for years in rhythm 'n' blues, and in its most authentic "rockabilly" stages — as performed by Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry — it conveyed a strong spontaneous rhythmic excitement. So strong, in fact, that 1950s "adult" American mass culture refused to allow for such raucousness.

By 1960 the original rock 'n' rollers had been slapped into line and young people's music was perpetrated by the likes of Fabian and Bobby Vee, who wore thin-lapelled black suits and cardigans, and greased the kids with niggling ineffectual sexuality.

BEFORE

But that was before the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Stones. Before long hair, before drugs, before "liberation". That was before it became popular to freak out, before the Woodstock generation.

The dawning of the rock age, back in the mid-1960s, was likened to the dawning of the age of Aquarius: Never before had there been a generation of young people who loved reading their press clippings so much.

With such a demand for music that celebrated the mores of this generation, the record industry was no longer an arm of Tin Pan Alley but rather a sophisticated machine-like processor, manufacturer and manipulator of public tastes.

EXPENSIVE

Most rock acts cannot make a single sound until acquiring tens of thousands of dollars worth of equipment. They cannot produce a "competitive" album without spending at least $60,000 on it.

It is this state of affairs that is the cornerstone of the recording industry. The operative words are hype, money and technology, and you are considered "talented" if you know how to work within this formula.

What grease did for Fabian, so does the technology of the modern recording studio do for the prospective rock star. You can literally make anyone sound "professional" in the studio, because the new technology can provide a "sound" for everyone.

The most successful acts use the facilities of the studio, along with the hype churned out by the publicity offices and into the radio stations and rock press, as the deciding factor in their music. They know you can make something out of nothing.

TWO FORMS

An act is said to be "major" if it's able to give the audience what it wants; audience identification has become a substitute for talent. This process has produced two basic forms of rock: the voluminous pounding rock groups, and the introspective navel-gazing of pop-rock singers.

Of course, there are variances — and some genuine talent does manage to surface — but the amount of repetition and the similarity amongst rock acts today is unprecedented.

Such limited boundaries has produced a generation of listeners whose conception of music is just as limited. Whereas rock has assimilated and watered down other musical genres for its own purposes, the real thing is rarely recognized. In fact, if one were to believe the young rock critics, rock has rendered other genres as obsolete. If a record doesn't sound like it is loaded with production, it is not considered music — if we are to believe the young mandarins of FM rock radio.

DEPENDENCE

Because rock is so commercially successful, its mythical qualities are being inflated. Because of heavy rock's dependence on an insistent pounding beat recorded at high volume, we are led to believe that it is more sophisticated in areas of rhythm and timbre than, say, jazz and rhythm 'n' blues. More often than not, the opposite is true.

If a singer does not indulge in studio resources to load his style with the tricky vocal quirks of an Elton John or the archetypal "sensitive" flatness of a James Taylor, he is said to be uninventive, not a good singer. As a result, the rock scene is glutted by singers so concerned with mannerisms that their voices themselves tell us virtually nothing.

Similarly, the "singer-songwriter": As long as he points in the direction of the navel, he's considered a philosopher.

STAR CRAVING

The horizons of the rock process are so narrow that today, when everyone is able to sound the same, people are craving for the next big superstar — a hunger that's caused a rush on fabricated myths, from Bruce Springsteen to the Bay City Rollers.

All this goes on as if rock was the saviour of us all. "Don't Knock the Rock" used to be a battle cry of individuality. Today, it's an excuse for a popular music scene that is nothing less than claustrophobic.

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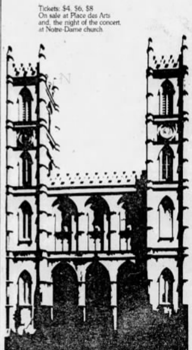
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